

Prescription drug prices continue to rise much faster than the rate of inflation. AARP's latest Rx Watchdog report released this week found that prices for nearly 200 of the most commonly used brand name medications rose 6.1 percent during the 12 month period from July 2004–June 2005. At the same time, the rate of general inflation was 3 percent. These drug price increases particularly hit older Americans, who use prescription drugs more than any other segment of the U.S. population.

In two weeks, millions of older and disabled Americans will have the opportunity to choose prescription drug coverage as part of their 2006 Medicare benefit options. The new Medicare prescription drug benefit will help millions of beneficiaries afford needed medications. Improvements to the Medicare Modernization Act are necessary to strengthen the benefit and the Medicare program. We believe the first step is to keep the drug benefit affordable for beneficiaries as well as taxpayers.

While the competitive structure already existing in the MMA may help to bring prescription drug prices down, we believe that giving the Secretary the authority to participate in negotiations may also help to make prescription drugs more affordable for Medicare beneficiaries.

We look forward to working with you and your colleagues on both sides of the aisle to ensure that the new Medicare Part D benefit remains affordable over time. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me, or have your staff contact Anna Schwamlein of our Federal Affairs staff at 202-434-3770.

Sincerely,

DAVID P. SLOANE,  
Sr. Managing Director,  
Government Relations and Advocacy.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, the letter says, and I will read a bit of it:

AARP supports your amendment to the Senate fiscal year 2006 Budget Reconciliation bill to provide for the ability of the Secretary of Health and Human Services to participate in the negotiations between pharmaceutical manufacturers and prescrip-

tion drug plans under the Medicare Part D program.

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Mr. President, there is a bit more to the letter, but I think the Senate can get the general drift.

The AARP, the organization that represents millions of older people, explicitly tonight endorses our bipartisan amendment. They have pointed out that the cost of these medications, the ones that are so important to older people, are going up double the rate of inflation.

Let me emphasize that to the Senate. The drugs that seniors use, the prices are going up double the rate of inflation.

So we need some serious tools to contain these costs. At a time when the

Federal Government ought to be using more effective tools to hold down the costs of medicine, we have locked into law a restriction on the ability of the Government to do what smart shoppers in America do every single day, and that is to use their marketplace clout, bulk purchasing power, to get the best value for them and their families. It is time to lift this outrageous, offensive restriction that is now in Medicare law that prevents the Federal Government from being a smart shopper. It is now time to stand up for taxpayers and stand up for the older people in this country. The Senate will have a chance to do that when it votes on the bipartisan amendment tomorrow that has been filed tonight, will be offered tomorrow, by Senator SNOWE, a bipartisan group. I hope my colleagues will support it resoundingly.

I yield the floor.

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#### ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 9 A.M. TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 7:56 p.m., adjourned until Thursday, November 3, 2006, at 9 a.m.

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#### NOMINATIONS

Executive nomination received by the Senate November 2, 2005:

##### EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

SUSAN C. SCHWAB, OF MARYLAND, TO BE A DEPUTY UNITED STATES TRADE REPRESENTATIVE, WITH THE RANK OF AMBASSADOR, VICE LINNET F. DEILY, RESIGNED.